

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) An information processing system, comprising:

 a first information processing apparatus capable of transmitting information to a terminal device; and

 a second information processing apparatus capable of transmitting information to the terminal device;

 said first information processing apparatus comprising:

 receiving means for receiving, after the terminal device has accessed said first information processing apparatus, a request signal from the terminal device to obtain information by which a user operating the terminal device may access said second information processing apparatus,

 user identifier generating means for generating a user identifier identifying the user operating the terminal device in response to the request signal,

 generation source identifier storage means for storing a generation source identifier that is assigned to said first information processing apparatus by the second information processing apparatus and which is provided by the second information processing apparatus, the generation source identifier identifying said first information processing apparatus as generation source of the user identifier and as introducer of the user operating the terminal device,

 first transmitting means for transmitting the user identifier and the generation source identifier to the second information processing apparatus to enable the second information processing apparatus to

record the user identifier and the generation source identifier as associated entries in a data base, and

second transmitting means for transmitting the user identifier and the generation source identifier to the terminal device to enable the terminal device to request access to the second information processing apparatus by sending the user identifier and the generation source identifier to the second information processing apparatus,

said second information processing apparatus comprising:

receiving means for receiving the user identifier and the generation source identifier from the terminal device,

authenticating means for authenticating the received user identifier and the received generation source identifier to permit access to stored information associated with said second information processing apparatus, and

payment processing means for executing a process to pay an introduction fee to said first information processing apparatus in response to successful authentication of the received user identifier and the received generation source identifier, said first information processing apparatus being identified using the received generation source identifier as the introducer of the user operating the terminal device; and

a link from said first information processing apparatus directly to said second information processing apparatus, said second information processing apparatus being accessible by said first information processing apparatus through said link.

2. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 1, wherein the request signal received by said receiving means of said first information processing apparatus is a request for the first information processing apparatus to issue a user password identifying the user operating the terminal device and to issue an introduction password, the user password being the user identifier and the introduction password being the generation source identifier.

3. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 2, wherein said receiving means of said first information processing apparatus includes means for receiving individual information of the user operating the terminal device.

4. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 3, wherein the user password and the introduction password are used for accessing homepage information contained within the external apparatus, and the introduction password identifies the homepage information of the first information processing apparatus to the second information processing apparatus.

5. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 3, wherein said first information processing apparatus further comprises individual information storage means for storing the received individual information.

6. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 5, wherein said user identifier generating means of said first information processing apparatus generates the user password in association with the received individual information and then transfers the user password to the individual information storage means which stores the user password in association with the individual information.

7. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 1, wherein the generation source

identifier stored by said generation identifier storage means of said first information processing apparatus identifies homepage information.

8. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 7, wherein the generation service identifier storage means stores an introduction password as the generation source identifier.

9. - 19. (cancelled)

20. (currently amended) An information processing method, comprising:

receiving, at a first information processing apparatus after the first information processing apparatus is accessed by a terminal device, a request signal from the terminal device to obtain information by which a user operating the terminal device may access a second information processing apparatus that is external to the first information processing apparatus;

generating, at the first information processing apparatus, a user identifier identifying the user operating the terminal device in response to the request signal;

storing, at the first information processing apparatus, a generation source identifier that is assigned to the first information processing apparatus by the second information processing apparatus and which is provided by the second information processing apparatus, the generation source identifier identifying the first information processing apparatus as generation source of the user identifier and as introducer of the user operating the terminal device;

transmitting, from the first information processing apparatus to the second information processing apparatus, the user identifier and the generation source identifier to enable the second information processing apparatus to

record the user identifier and the generation source identifier as associated entries in a data base;

transmitting, from the first information processing apparatus to the terminal device, the user identifier and the generation source identifier to enable the terminal device to request access to the second information processing apparatus by sending the user identifier and the generation source identifier to the second information processing apparatus;

receiving, at the second information processing apparatus, the user identifier and the generation source identifier from the terminal device; ~~and~~

authenticating, at the second information processing apparatus, the received user identifier and the received generation source identifier to permit access to stored information associated with the second information processing apparatus; ~~and~~

executing a process, at the second information processing apparatus, to pay an introduction fee to the first information processing apparatus in response to successful authentication of the received user identifier and the received generation source identifier, the first information processing apparatus being identified using the received generation source identifier as the introducer of the user operating the terminal device; and

the second information processing apparatus being accessible by the first information processing apparatus through a link from the first information processing apparatus directly to the second information processing apparatus.

21. (cancelled)

22. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 20, wherein the request from the

terminal device is a request to issue a user password identifying the user operating the terminal device and to issue an introduction password, the user password being the user identifier and the introduction password being the generation source identifier.

23. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 22, wherein said receiving step at the first information processing apparatus includes receiving individual information of the user operating the terminal device.

24. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 23, wherein the user password and the introduction password are used for accessing homepage information contained within the second information processing apparatus, and the introduction password identifies the homepage information of the first information processing apparatus to the second information processing apparatus.

25. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 23, further comprising: storing, at the first information processing apparatus, the received individual information.

26. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 25, wherein said generating step includes generating the user password in association with the received individual information and storing the user password in association with the individual information.

27. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 20, wherein the stored generation source identifier identifies homepage information.

28. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 27, wherein an introduction password is stored as the generation source identifier.

29. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 1, wherein the authenticating means of the second information processing apparatus comprises an input checker for determining whether a given receiving of the user identifier is an initial reception, and a user identifier register for registering the user identifier determined by the input checker to be an initial reception and for storing at least one previously received user identifier.

30. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 1, wherein the authenticating means of the second information processing apparatus comprises a generation source processor for outputting generation source information or no-generation source information based on a result of a comparison of the received generation source identifier and the at least one previously stored generation source identifier.

31. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 30, wherein the generation source processor updates a point value that corresponds to the generation source identifier indicating the generation source based on the result of the comparison.

32. (previously presented) The information processing system according to claim 31, wherein said second information processing apparatus further comprises homepage information storage means for storing homepage information, and wherein the payment processing means converts the point value to an amount of currency and generates a signal for causing payment of the amount of currency to the first information processing apparatus, the signal serving a settlement signal having an identifier corresponding to a homepage of a payment source, an account number associated with the received generation source identifier, and information concerning the paid amount of currency.

33. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 20, wherein the authenticating step includes determining whether a given receiving of the user identifier is an initial reception, registering the user identifier determined by the input checker to be an initial reception, and storing at least one previously received user identifier.

34. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 20, wherein the authenticating step includes outputting generation source information or no-generation source information based on a result of a comparison of the received generation source identifier and a previously stored generation source identifier.

35. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 34, wherein the authenticating step includes updating a point value that corresponds to the generation source identifier indicating the generation source based on the result of the comparison.

36. (previously presented) The information processing method according to claim 35, further comprising storing homepage information, and wherein the executing step includes converting the point value to an amount of currency and generating a signal for causing payment of the amount of currency to the first information processing apparatus, the signal serving a settlement signal having an identifier corresponding to a homepage of a payment source, an account number associated with the received generation source identifier, and information concerning the paid amount of currency.